



Laurel Bed Lake Angler Survey 2002 Summary Report

An angler survey was conducted at Laurel Bed Lake from April through June 2001. Anglers were interviewed at the conclusion of their fishing trips and asked a series of questions to gather data on angler effort, species preference, catch, harvest and economic contributions. Anglers were interviewed during either the morning or evening period three days a week and on weekend days.

A total of 1,303 anglers were interviewed during the survey period. Data gathered during these interviews were used to estimate fishing pressure and total catch, as well as to determine the species that anglers prefer to fish for and how much money they spend in pursuit of these fish at Laurel Bed.

An estimated 2,389 anglers fished for a total of 10,324 hours during April, May and June 2001. Fifty-seven percent of anglers fished from boats, whereas 43 percent fished from the bank. The average fishing trip lasted 3.5 hours in April, 4.5 hours in May and 4.7 hours in June. Total fishing pressure also increased steadily from April (2,014 angler hours) to May (3,178 angler hours) to June (5,132 angler hours).

Species preference changed considerably through the period. More than 70 percent of anglers fished for brook trout during April, but the percentage dropped to 26 in May and only 10 percent of anglers fished for brook trout in June. The percentage of anglers fishing for smallmouth bass increased from about 20 percent in April to 34 percent in May and 40 percent in June. Less than five percent of anglers reported fishing specifically for rock bass. Many anglers (35 percent overall, 47 percent in June) reported that they were just fishing, without a particular species in mind.

The survey estimated that more than 20,000 fish were caught at Laurel Bed Lake during the three-month period, including more than 11,000 rock bass, 6,000 smallmouths and 3,000 brook trout. Anglers also landed a few (16) rainbow trout and three sunfish.

During the survey period, anglers enjoyed an outstanding catch rate of two fish per hour (all species combined). Anglers targeting brook trout caught one every hour and half, whereas smallmouth anglers caught one bass per hour. Anglers fishing specifically for rock bass, or fishing for any species, caught a fish every 40 minutes.

Each angler spent about 15 dollars per fishing trip. An estimated \$35,575 was spent by anglers during the survey period. Gasoline represented the largest expenditure (37.5 percent), followed by food and drinks (32 percent), bait and tackle (28 percent) and lodging (2.5 percent). The fact that Laurel Bed is situated atop Clinch Mountain is reflected in the sizable expenditures for gasoline. The relatively small amount spent for lodging suggests that the Laurel Bed fishery is utilized primarily by local anglers.

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